

# Come up with mini hydro proposals, researchers, engineers urged

**KUCHING:** Researchers, academicians, engineers attending the 6th International Engineering Conference (EnCon 2013) organised by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) here have been challenged to come up with solid proposal on constructing mini hydroelectric plants for the people in rural areas like Baram and Belaga.

Minister of Infrastructure Development and Communications Dato Sri Michael Manyin Jawong said the state had vast rural areas, especially in Baram, and the rural areas were not easy to be supplied with electricity.

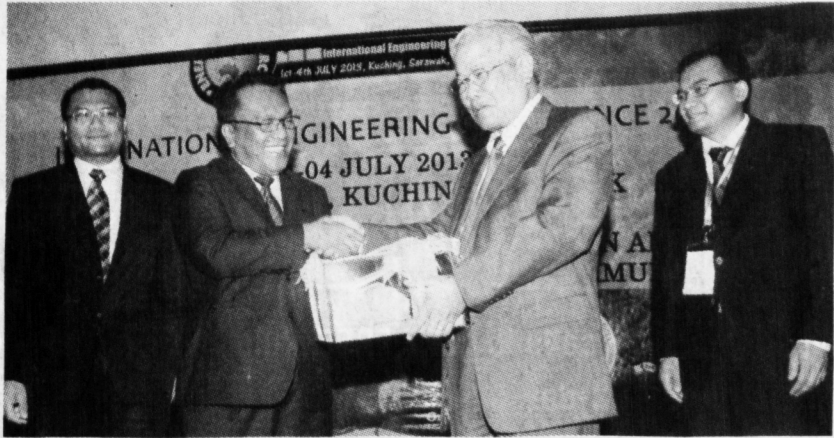
"To connect the grid to all the small longhouses and villages in rural areas could be very costly as these places are hard to reach as there are no roads. So while waiting for roads to be built, I would like to suggest that the researchers and academicians come up with proposals on how to build mini hydroelectric plants so that the rural community can benefit from the electricity generated," Manyin told reporters after officiating at the 6th International Engineering Conference (EnCon 2013) at Hilton Kuching here, on Tuesday.

According to Manyin, mini hydroelectric plants like some built in Australia have been successful.

"So I would like the academicians, the universities to really come up with solid proposals that will benefit rural areas, especially Baram," he said.

Manyin said it was difficult and costly to build roads to connect one area with another as the rural areas were so far apart.

"It is not that we don't want to build, but because the money is not there yet," he said.



**UNIMAS** Vice Chancellor Prof. Dato' Dr. Mohamad Kadim Suaidi (2nd left) presenting a souvenir to Dato Sri Michael Manyin Jawong, while UNIMAS's Engineering Dean Prof. Dr. Wan Hashim Wan Ibrahim (left) and Associate Prof. Ir. Dr. Andrew Ragai look on. PHOTO: RAMIDI SUBARI

He reiterated that mini hydroelectric plants would definitely be cost effective because each plant would be localised.

Earlier in his speech, Manyin said sustainable development was defined as development that would meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs.

He said sustainable development embodied socio-economic wellbeing in reducing poverty, respecting human rights and long-term economic viability; and environmental health in pursuing sustainable patterns of production and consumption, protecting natural resources and responsible environmental management.

"This call for synergies and trade-offs to be made amongst economic, social and environmental values, to be achieved in a transparent and accountable manner. From the provision of energy to support our activi-

ties, renewable energy resources if developed and managed sustainably, can bring about wide-ranging benefits while providing the community with an avenue to correct unsustainable practices," he said.

UNIMAS Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dato' Dr. Mohamad Kadim Suaidi, in his speech, said the subject of sustainable development had been of great concern in recent years and the 'green' emphasis had increased dramatically.

He said the theme for this year's conference "Energy and Environment" was appropriate as it reflected the awareness of this very important issue.

He said EnCon 2013 offered six keynote lectures and more than 100 papers from 10 countries were presented in 18 sessions.

"These papers covered a wide range of topics, including green technology, smart materials for energy efficiency and environment," said Dr. Mohamad Kadim.